

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

Inquiry into the Welsh Government's Historic Environment Policy

Response from Brecknock Society and Museum Friends

I make this submission on behalf of the Brecknock Society and Museum Friends. Since its founding in 1928, our Society has had, inter alia, the aim of promoting the study and understanding of the archaeology and history of Wales, especially the historic county of Brecknock. Each year we publish the Journal Brycheiniog which contains many articles in this field of scholarship. This is read not only by our local members but by subscribers elsewhere in the UK and is to be found in a number of major research libraries. Back numbers are also available on line via the National Library at Aberystwyth.

Some weeks ago I wrote to Mr Lewis presenting our view that The Royal Commission should remain an independent body

Since then I have become aware of the Consultation and its terms of reference. I have been back to my Committee members with a list of the consultation questions and we have agreed that we only wish to make a response to the question that relates to the future of the RCAHMS

'What would be the advantages and disadvantages of merging the functions of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales with the functions of other organisations, including Cadw?'

Over the years we have been deeply impressed with the work of the Royal Commission as reflected in its excellent publications (old and new), which are well regarded by our members as a constant source of reference for the history of Wales; its buildings and historical sites. We also value the Royal Commission for the ready help that it has given to our members in respect of requests for advice and information.

If I may, I will pick out one very recent example. It is now almost 50 years since seven seminal articles on the houses of Brecknock by Stanley Jones and J.T. Smith were published in Brycheiniog. Seeking to mark this achievement and to bring the story of the vernacular buildings of our area up to date, we approached the Royal Commission to see if it might be interested in some kind of collaboration. The response was quick and positive, and within a short time we were able to convene a meeting at which the best lines of future action could be determined. During this exchange of information and ideas, we were very impressed with the Commission's extremely effective approach to the production and marketing of publications and to their ability to collate and disseminate information via the web. We were also very impressed with the competence, experience and imagination of the Royal Commission staff who we met.

It is RCAHMW's track record of excellent and wide-ranging research and its enthusiasm for collaborative work with bodies such as ours which would, we feel, be put in jeopardy if a merger with CADW were to go ahead. We consider that the disadvantages would greatly outweigh any advantages.